DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 318 CE 061 408

AUTHOR	Wagner, Judith O.
TITLE	Job Search Methods. ERIC Digest No. 121.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-CE-92-121
PUB DATE	92
CONTRACT	RI88062005
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Planning; *Employment Interviews; Employment Qualifications; Guidelines; *Job Application; *Job Search Methods; Newspapers; *Resumes (Personal); Social Support Groups
IDENTIFIERS	Employment Agencies; ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

Steps in preparing and conducting a job search include the following: (1) developing a resume; (2) locating prospective employers; (3) applying for the job; (4) interviewing; and (5) following through. The two types of resumes are the chronological and the functional. Most application forms require some basic information: name, address, and telephone number; social security number; previous job experience; educational information; and references. Among the most frequently used methods of locating employers are cold calls, networking, newspaper ads, and employment agencies. In applying for a job, the cover letter should be personalized and contain relevant information for the job being applied for. The job interview involves an exchange between people trying to find out whether they can work together to mutual benefit. Advance preparation and knowledge of interview etiquette are important. Follow-up includes a thank-you letter and a phone call. (A bibliography lists 16 examples of the types of materials found at career centers and the public library.) (NLA)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

DIGEST
NO. 121

Job Search Methods

by Judith O. Wagner

1992

EDO-CE-92-121

People look for jobs for many different reasons: they are laid off, they want to reenter the work force, they want or need to relocate, they dislike their present job, they want to get a better job, or they are entering the labor force for the first time. This *ERIC Digest* provides guidelines for preparing for and conducting a job search. Steps discussed include (1) developing a resume; (2) locating prospective employers; (3) applying for the job; (4) interviewing; and (5) following through. These are only guidelines; you will find additional detailed information at your public library or high school or college career center. "Job Search Methods" is a companion to *ERIC Digest No. 85*, "Locating Job Information."

Developing a Resume

The two main types of resumes are the chronological and the functional. A chronological resume is used when you have had a fairly direct path of development from one position to another in the same field. A functional resume emphasizes your skills and is used by people who change jobs or careers frequently. A good resume will be one page long and will capture your career goals and education and work history. However, for some positions you should include lists of publications and a sample of your writing.

A resume should include the following information: name, address, telephone number; job objective or career goal; educational history (degrees, certificates, courses, accomplishments); work history including military service (skills, experience); and memberships related to your job objective. Depending on the position for which you are applying, it might also include work-related honors or achievements, knowledge of foreign languages, ability to travel or relocate, and security clearance information.

Job Application Forms

Some jobs do not require a formal resume but may call for a written application. Most application forms require basic information such as your name, address, and telephone number; social security number; dates of previous jobs; names and addresses of former employers; and dates of schooling or training. Before you begin to fill out the application, read it through to be sure that you have all required information. It is very important that you print the information neatly and legibly. If your application makes a poor impression, you are unlikely to get further with that employer.

Although not every job calls for letters of reference, you should ask people if they would be willing to write one for you. Do not list someone as a reference unless you have their permission to do so. Candidates for references include former employers, teachers, volunteer supervisors, and other people who can assess your character.

Locating Employers

When you have determined the kind of job you want, you must locate potential employers. Among the most frequently used methods of finding them are making "cold calls"; getting information from friends, relatives, or colleagues; reading want ads; and using employment agencies. Usually, more than one source will be used and there are advantages and disadvantages to all methods.

"Cold Calls"

This technique involves visiting employers to see if there are openings. A person using this method of finding a job needs high motivation and good interpersonal skills. Sometimes talking directly to the person who makes the hiring decision rather than the personnel office produces better results. Before calling on small companies, it is a good idea to call or write ahead of time; they may not appreciate interruptions. Letters followed by phone calls can be effective for small and medium-sized businesses. Advantages of cold calls are that some jobs are not listed anywhere else, the opening may be new, and you may be in the right place at the right time. Disadvantages include the time involved and the high rejection rate.

Networking

Learning about an opening through friends, relatives, or co-workers is the most successful way to get a job. One of the reasons for this is that employers do not like to hire strangers. They know that people who are referred to a company tend to be more stable and therefore will stay longer in the job. Advantages of networking are that referrals often guarantee an interview, jobs offered often are better with higher pay, and it is easier to develop a relationship with the potential employer when referred by a colleague.

Newspaper Ads

Many people start their job search with want ads. This is unfortunate because it is frequently a last resort for employers. Advantages of classified ads are that they list specific openings and have frequent new listings. Disadvantages are that the jobs are often undesirable, hard-to-fill, or have a high turnover rate; positions are often at the high and low ends of the skill/experience spectrum--few in the middle; there is little information about the job or employer; there is intense competition; and ads list a small proportion of available jobs.

Employment Agencies

Public employment services are funded by the federal government and administered by states. They are widely viewed as ineffective, primarily offering low paying, low status jobs. Their main advantage is that there is no cost to the client or employer. Disadvantages are that they are usually looking for unskilled or casual labor; there are fewer occupations offered than listed in want ads; and they offer limited opportunities.

Private/temporary agencies will, for a fee, try to match employers and employees. Depending on the agency and the position offered, the fee may be paid entirely by the employer

or by the employee, or they may split it. Some agencies specialize in a particular field such as clerical workers or sales people. Private agencies tend to be more successful with experienced people with sharply defined skills, good work histories, and employment in a single field. Advantages are that they offer a chance for employer and prospective employee to explore the possibility of a permanent relationship and they may list positions not offered elsewhere. The main disadvantage is the fee.

Applying and Interviewing for Jobs

Once you have found a job that sounds good to you, you must apply for it. This involves writing to the company offering the job and including your resume or a job application. In either case, your cover letter is very important--it is the first thing that your prospective employer will see. The letter should be personalized and contain information such as where you heard about the job, an indication of your interest, why you are suited for the position, and your interest in interviewing. It should include your name, address, and phone number.

The next step in the job search is the job interview, which involves an exchange between people trying to find out whether they can work together to mutual benefit. Before you go to the interview learn as much as you can about a prospective employer by reading brochures, talking to present employees, calling the chamber of commerce, or visiting the public library. Some interviewing dos and don'ts: Do be honest; be prompt (better 10 minutes early than 1 minute late); use a firm handshake; dress appropriately; make eye contact; address interviewer by name--pronounced correctly; use good grammar; know something about the company; prepare to ask intelligent and thoughtful questions; ask for the job; and prepare to answer commonly asked questions and to respond to questions that interviewer **cannot** ask. Don't sound arrogant; be too personal; smoke or chew gum; make excuses; or bring up salary at the first interview.

After the interview, it is important to maintain contact with the prospective employer. Write a thank you letter, indicating that you will call at a specific time to find out your status regarding the position. Call when you said you would. If the answer is no, ask why. Knowing why you **did not** get a job may help you get the next one.

For More Information

More information including examples of application forms, resumes, cover and follow-up letters, and frequently asked interview questions will be found in high school and college career centers and at your public library. They also have materials directed to special populations such as veterans, minorities, and women. This bibliography lists examples of the types of materials you will find there.

Allen, Jeffrey G. ***Jeff Allen's Best: Get the Interview.*** New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990.

Allen, Jeffrey G. ***Jeff Allen's Best: The Resume.*** New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990.

Allen, Jeffrey G. ***Jeff Allen's Best: Win the Job.*** New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990.

Help in writing resumes, getting interviews, developing contacts, establishing networks, marketing yourself, and writing cover letters.

Baxter, R., and Brashear, M. ***Do-It-Yourself CareerKit: A Career Planning Tool.*** Moraga, CA: Bridgewater Press, 1990.

Step-by-step guidance in finding out about yourself and what you want from work, zeroing in on job opportunities, and getting where you want to go.

Beatty, Richard H. ***The Perfect Cover Letter.*** New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1989.

Purpose and importance of cover letters, good and bad design, and practical advice regarding information to be included.

Bloch, D. P. ***How to Have a Winning Job Interview.*** Lincoln, IL: VGM Career Horizons, 1992.

Offers 12 steps to a winning interview and helps you decide if the job for which you are interviewing is the one you want.

Bloch, D. P. ***How to Write a Winning Resume.*** Lincoln, IL: VGM Career Horizons, 1989.

A step-by-step guide to help you through the resume writing process.

Bloomfield, W. M. ***Career Action Plan.*** Bloomington, IL: Meridian Education Corporation, 1989.

Exercises and activities that will help you plan your future as it relates to your career.

Kimeldorf, M. ***Pathways to Work.*** Bloomington, IL: Meridian Education Corporation, 1989.

What employers look for in an application, what kinds of questions are asked during an interview, and how to describe your skills and interests.

Kimeldorf, M. ***Write into a Job.*** Bloomington, IL: Meridian Education Corporation, 1990.

How to write a job-getting resume that will highlight your qualities.

Medley, H. Anthony. ***Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed.*** Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1984.

Information on types of interviews, controlling the content of an interview, salary discussions, preparation, and difficult questions.

Merrill, F. L. ***Job Search Manual for Mature Workers.*** Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Council on Careers for Older Americans, 1987. (ED 311 300)

Provides help to mature people on changing careers, looking for a second career, or returning to the work force after retirement.

Passage, Your Workplace and Job Skills Information Newsletter.

Information on all aspects of the job search. Available from Beaver County Area Labor-Management Committee, 617 Midland Avenue, Midland, PA 15059.

Reed, Jean. ***Resumes that Get Jobs.*** New York: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Information on resumes, classified ads, cover letters, and interviews.

Wegmann, Robert; Chapman, Robert; and Johnson, Miriam. ***Work in the New Economy. Careers and Job Seeking into the 21st Century. Revised Edition.*** Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development; Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, Inc., 1989. (ED 308 322)

Information on finding jobs, deciding on a job objective, getting interviews, using labor market intermediaries, and using effective interview strategies.

Yate, Martin John. ***Resumes that Knock 'em Dead.*** Boston: Bob Adams, Inc., 1988.

Includes actual resumes and explains how to put a resume together.

Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract No. RI88062005. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of OERI or the Department. ***Digests*** may be freely reproduced.

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 KENNY ROAD • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210
Telephone: (614) 292-4353 or (800) 848-4815